

The bill authorizes \$50 million for the Secretary of Homeland Security to create a research and development program to improve freight and intercity passenger rail security. The Secretary of Homeland Security is also required to develop a national plan for public outreach and awareness and a study on passenger, baggage, and cargo screening.

Moreover, the Rail Security Act of 2005 focuses on an issue that security bills often ignore: the importance of ensuring that key workers have the support and training required to protect our rail system, whether those workers are railroad employees or emergency responders.

Rail workers are truly the eyes and ears of the rail industry. They greet passengers, sell tickets, operate trains, maintain track and signal systems, dispatch trains, operate bridges, and repair cars. They are in the most direct position to spot security risks and potential threats. This bill requires rail carriers to provide security training to these workers to ensure that they are prepared to take appropriate action against threat conditions. The bill also strengthens whistleblower protections to ensure that workers who report or identify a security risk will not face retribution or retaliation from their employers. A rail worker should not have to "choose between doing the right thing on security and holding on to his or her job. Despite whistleblower protections in current law, employees still experience employer harassment and intimidation when reporting accidents, injuries, and other safety concerns. This language will help ensure that these practices end.

Congressmen HENRY WAXMAN, ELIJAH CUMMINGS, and I asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in 2002 to examine ten communities to evaluate whether they were prepared to respond to rail incidents involving hazardous materials, whether accidental or intentional. Accidents in urban areas, such as the 2001 occurrence in the Howard Street Tunnel in Baltimore, Maryland, involving a fire fueled by hazardous materials, and a leak of hydrochloric acid from a parked tank car in an urban area in Lowell, Massachusetts, have called attention to the safety of hazardous materials shipped by rail. The recent tragedy in Graniteville, South Carolina showed the devastating effects such hazmat accidents can cause.

To my disappointment, GAO found that many emergency responders were not properly trained to respond to incidents involving hazardous materials and radioactive waste. In each of the ten Communities evaluated, local fire department officials confirmed that fire department personnel had only received hazardous material awareness-level training, the lowest level of training recommended in National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 472, Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents. This training provides first responders with the knowledge and skills to identify a hazardous materials incident and to contact the appropriate response resource. However, NFPA representatives have advised me that the minimum level of training for first responders should actually be at the operations level, the second highest level of training described in NFPA Standard 472, which trains responders to plan and initiate a response to the incident. The Rail Security Act of 2005 requires this training.

GAO also found that while most local communities have equipment on hand to use in response to a hazardous material incident, some locations lacked important equipment, such as detectors, decontamination equipment, and personal protective gear needed to respond to accidents involving hazardous materials and radioactive waste. My bill addresses this need. It authorizes the Secretary of Transportation to make grants to State and local governments, as well as nonprofit employee organizations representing emergency responders, for advanced firefighter turnout gear.

The Rail Security Act of 2005 also ensures that emergency responders will be able to get real-time information for dealing with hazardous materials and passenger railroad incidents through the Operation Respond Institute. The bill provides Operation Respond with \$2.5 million for each of fiscal years 2005 through 2007 for deploying and expanding the Operation Respond Emergency Information System software, developing and implementing a railroad infrastructure mapping program, and establishing an alert and messaging capability for use during emergencies involving freight and passenger railroads.

The Rail Security Act of 2005 includes legislation that the House has overwhelmingly passed in previous Congresses, the Rail Passenger Disaster Family Assistance Act, which ensures that the needs of the families of the victims of terrorist attacks or accidents are addressed. This bill was similar to legislation we enacted in 1996 to address the treatment of families of the victims of airline crashes. We should do no less for those who ride our nation's passenger trains.

As we introduce this bill today, we invite other colleagues to join us in co-sponsorship and work together to ensure its passage.

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 57th anniversary of Israel's independence.

Today we celebrate the realization of a two thousand year old Jewish dream to return to the ancient kingdom of Israel. Centuries of persecution and propaganda gave this dream a sense of urgency and, at the end of the Nineteenth Century, Theodor Herzl and other Jewish leaders throughout the world mobilized to establish a new Jewish state. Their dream inspired persecuted Jews throughout the world to courageously find refuge in Palestine in search of a better life for themselves and their children. Without their bravery and determination, the rebirth of Israel never would have been possible. The unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust further cemented the necessity of a Jewish state, and Israel was finally established as a sovereign and independent nation on May 14, 1948.

The State of Israel was founded on the ideals of pluralism, freedom, and human rights and has maintained these democratic ideals in the face of war, terrorism, and frequent diplomatic isolation. Israel has served as a beacon of democracy in the Middle East and its shared values with the United States has led

to a natural kinship between the two nations. We have maintained a strong alliance with Israel based on friendship, principles, strategy, and a commitment to defeat terror.

Israel's determination to maintain its democratic principles in the face of relentless threats to its citizens has been admirable. We salute this accomplishment and we must work with Israel to defeat terrorist threats to the institutions that nurture democracy and prosperity in our two countries and throughout the world.

Since we celebrated this day a year ago, Israel has experienced an increased sense of optimism for the achievement of a full and lasting peace. The newly elected leader of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, has publicly denounced terrorism and has vowed to both crack down on militants and to root out corruption in the Palestinian Authority. Similarly, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has demonstrated his commitment to peace by preparing for the withdrawal of Israeli settlers from all 21 settlements in Gaza and four in the West Bank. Although the realization of a full and lasting peace in Israel remains distant, we must embrace these developments as a reflection of the cautious optimism embodied in Israel's national anthem, *Hatikvah*, which means "the hope." We hope that Israel will continue to serve as the "light unto the nations" that Herzl envisioned more than a century ago and that Israel's 58th year will be a time of peace throughout the region.

IDEAS ON RETIREMENT SECURITY

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I wish to submit for the RECORD this article that appeared in the Hartford Courant on May 9, 2005. It poses the idea of investing the Social Security surplus in the financial markets. The future of Social Security would be addressed through the strength of these markets without the uncertainties of the stability of individual private accounts. The author also addresses some of the concerns that have been raised about this idea.

As you can see, there are many thoughts that can be brought to the table to address the future of Social Security and to utilize the forces of the financial markets without being wedded to private accounts. Additionally, there are many issues surrounding personal retirement savings and pension security that deserve to be looked at carefully.

[From the Hartford Courant, May 10, 2005]

PUSH-BUTTON PICKS JUST TOO SIMPLE

(By Dan Haar)

The Social Security private accounts tour passed through Hartford Monday with some downhome remarks from Treasury Secretary John W. Snow that called to mind H. Ross Perot, who sounded open-minded but wasn't. Snow was in town pushing President Bush's scheme to move much of the Social Security trust fund into private accounts, where you and I can watch our retirement accounts grow and wither and maybe grow back again.

The private accounts would cost an estimated \$2 trillion to set up, and they would do nothing on their own to fill the Social Security shortfall. These are not points of debate.